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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 002804

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SUBJECT: NEW HOME MINISTER TO PROMOTE DIALOGUE WITH PARTIES

REF: A. KATHMANDU 2743

¶B. KATHMANDU 2773

Classified By: Ambassador James Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶11. (C) New Home Minister Kamal Thapa told the Ambassador on December 13 that until "the Maoists showed sincerity," the government would not talk with them. Thapa saw no indication that the Maoists had changed their policy of using violence to achieve their goal of power, even if they now say that they accept a multi-party system. He noted that the constitutional crisis could only be solved through elections to Parliament and hoped that the Parties would participate. He said he would use his political background and connections to encourage the Parties to see the Maoists as the enemy and work with the Palace. While he thought it unlikely the King would take any major initiative to reach out to the Parties, Thapa said he hoped to discuss a government cease-fire and concrete peace initiatives with others in the government.  
End Summary.

No Talks Until Maoists Show "Sincerity"

¶12. (C) New Home Minister Kamal Thapa told the Ambassador on December 13 that he saw no possibility for dialogue with the Maoists in the immediate future. Thapa opined that there was no "miraculous" solution to the Maoist insurgency, but rather it would be resolved over time with patience and work. Thapa acknowledged that the King "probably had in his mind" Thapa's and new Land Reform Minister Narayan Singh Pun's experience in previous talks with the Maoists when he appointed them to the new cabinet (ref A). However, Thapa said he had not discussed possible talks with the Maoists with the King "at any length." Thapa commented that the King was keeping the door open and would "welcome the Maoists when they renounced violence and showed a credible commitment to mainstream politics." The Ambassador expressed concern that that approach amounted to the government waiting for the Maoists to surrender; a more constructive approach would be to discuss with the Maoists their renouncing violence and entering mainstream politics. Thapa commented that the precondition for dialogue would be a show of "sincerity" by the Maoists. Then, he said, His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMGN) would be ready "to discuss all issues and subjects with the Maoists." Thapa said he would try "direct

and indirect contact with Maoists" to convey HMGN policy.

#### No Change in Maoist Goals

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¶3. (C) Discussing the Maoist-Parties' 12-point understanding, Thapa said he saw no change in Maoist policy. While the seven-party alliance claimed that the Maoists were now ready for a peaceful resolution, Thapa noted that the Maoists had not abandoned their key demands such as a constituent assembly. While the Maoists now appear to have accepted a multi-party system, Thapa listed North Korea and China as countries with "multi-party systems," and quoted Maoist leaders Baburam Bhattarai and Prachanda as saying that under a multi-party system there was no room for feudal forces or capitalist democratic parties. Thapa allowed that the Maoists could keep this ideology as long as they renounced violence as a means to achieving their objective.

#### King Has No Plan To Reach Out

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¶4. (C) The Ambassador stressed that it was the King's role to reach out to the Parties. Thapa replied that, formally, he did not think that the King had any major, significant plans to reach out to the Parties. Thapa admitted that there was "huge distrust" between the Parties and the Palace, and promised to use his Party background to try informally to bring the sides together. To demonstrate his ability to reach out, Thapa noted that he had spoken to the organizers of the Human Rights Day rally (ref B) and tried to suggest ways that the rally could take place without arrests. However, rally organizers had told Thapa they wanted to get arrested, so Thapa said the government had no choice but to protect the rights of the people who needed to go to the nearby hospital, school and shopping area by arresting the rally members who defied the law and protested in the restricted area.

#### Government Should Take Initiative

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¶5. (C) The Ambassador suggested that HMGN could benefit from calling a cease-fire. Thapa agreed that, as a matter of principle, the government should take concrete peace initiatives. Thapa claimed he had joined HMGN hoping to discuss such ideas. He also believed that there was no military solution to the insurgency. He said he would do his best to work for a resolution of the Maoist insurgency, as the King had given him the challenging task of Home Minister.

#### Elections Key

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¶6. (C) Thapa said it was "sad" that constitutional forces did not embrace elections; only the restoration of elected bodies, particularly Parliament, could resolve the current constitutional crisis. He argued that the Parties had failed to make a "clear assessment" and had labeled the Palace rather than the Maoists as the enemy, even though the Maoists had killed many party cadre. The Ambassador noted that the King's actions since February 1 had pushed the Parties away. Thapa agreed to some extent with the Ambassador, and promised to continue using his personal contacts with seven-party alliance leaders to convince the Parties to move away from the Maoists and toward the Palace. Thapa added that the Maoists were working to split the legitimate democratic forces; once they defeated their main enemy, the monarchy, then the Maoists would work to defeat their secondary enemy - the political parties. To avoid this, Thapa said he hoped to convince the Parties to participate in the elections. He identified support by the international community and the people of Nepal as key factors that would make the elections successful.

#### Comment

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¶7. (C) Thapa, a longtime and close Embassy contact, is an intelligent and generally well-respected politician. We hope that his idealism and personal connections with political party leaders will bolster his efforts to encourage the government to take the bold steps of reaching out to the Parties and calling a cease-fire. Thapa himself seemed somewhat doubtful about the former, given the King's current views, but it could help to have his voice in the Cabinet.

MORIARTY